IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims of the above-identified application so as to read as follows:

1. (Canceled, without prejudice)

2. (Canceled, without prejudice)

3. (Canceled, without prejudice)

4. (Canceled, without prejudice)

5. (Canceled, without prejudice)

6. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus including a storing ~~meansunit~~ unit for storing image data and performing an output process based on the image data stored in the storing ~~meansunit~~ unit, comprising a controller including:

means for designating ~~the~~ image data stored in the storing ~~meansunit~~ unit, and accepting an instruction for concealment of the designated image data,

means for concealing the designated image data based on the accepted instruction, and

~~means for nullifying unconcealed image data~~ means for nullifying image data which is not designated by repeatedly overwriting the data which is not designated with meaningless data whereby the undesignated image data is prevented from recurring in said storing unit in reproducible form.

7. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the controller further comprises:

means for detecting whether or not a processing ~~meansunit~~ unit for processing the image data is provided and an operation state thereof, and

means for determining a concealing method based on detected results.

8. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus including a storing ~~meansunit~~ unit for storing image data and performing an output operation based on the image data stored in the storing ~~meansunit~~ unit, comprising a controller including:

means for designating the image data stored in the storing ~~meansunit~~ unit, and accepting an instruction for concealment of the designated image data,

means for detecting whether or not a processing ~~meansunit~~ unit for processing the image data is provided and an operation state thereof,

means for determining a concealing method based on detected results, ~~and~~

means for concealing the designated image data by means of the determined method based on the accepted instruction, and

means for nullifying image data which is not designated by repeatedly overwriting the data which is not designated with meaningless data whereby the undesignated image data is prevented from recurring in said storing unit in reproducible form.

9.(Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

the concealing method is encrypting the image data, and

the controller includes

means for decoding encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation based on the image data.

10. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein

the concealing method is setting of authentication information ~~encrypting~~ to the image data,

the controller further comprises:

means for accepting authentication information;

means for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information; and

means for permitting the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information~~, and~~

~~the controller decodes encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation based on the image data~~.

11. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim ~~8~~ 10, wherein

the concealing method is encrypting the image data, and

the controller

decodes encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation based on the image data.

12. (Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein a concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and the controller

accepts authentication information,

verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information, and

permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

13. (Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and the controller

accepts authentication information,

verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information, and

permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

14. (Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and the controller

accepts authentication information,

verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information, and

permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

15. (Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and the controller

accepts authentication information,

verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information, and

permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

16. (Canceled, without prejudice)

17. (Canceled, without prejudice)